$1.50

PORTLAND ATARI CLUB

APRIL 1985

IN THIS ISSUE

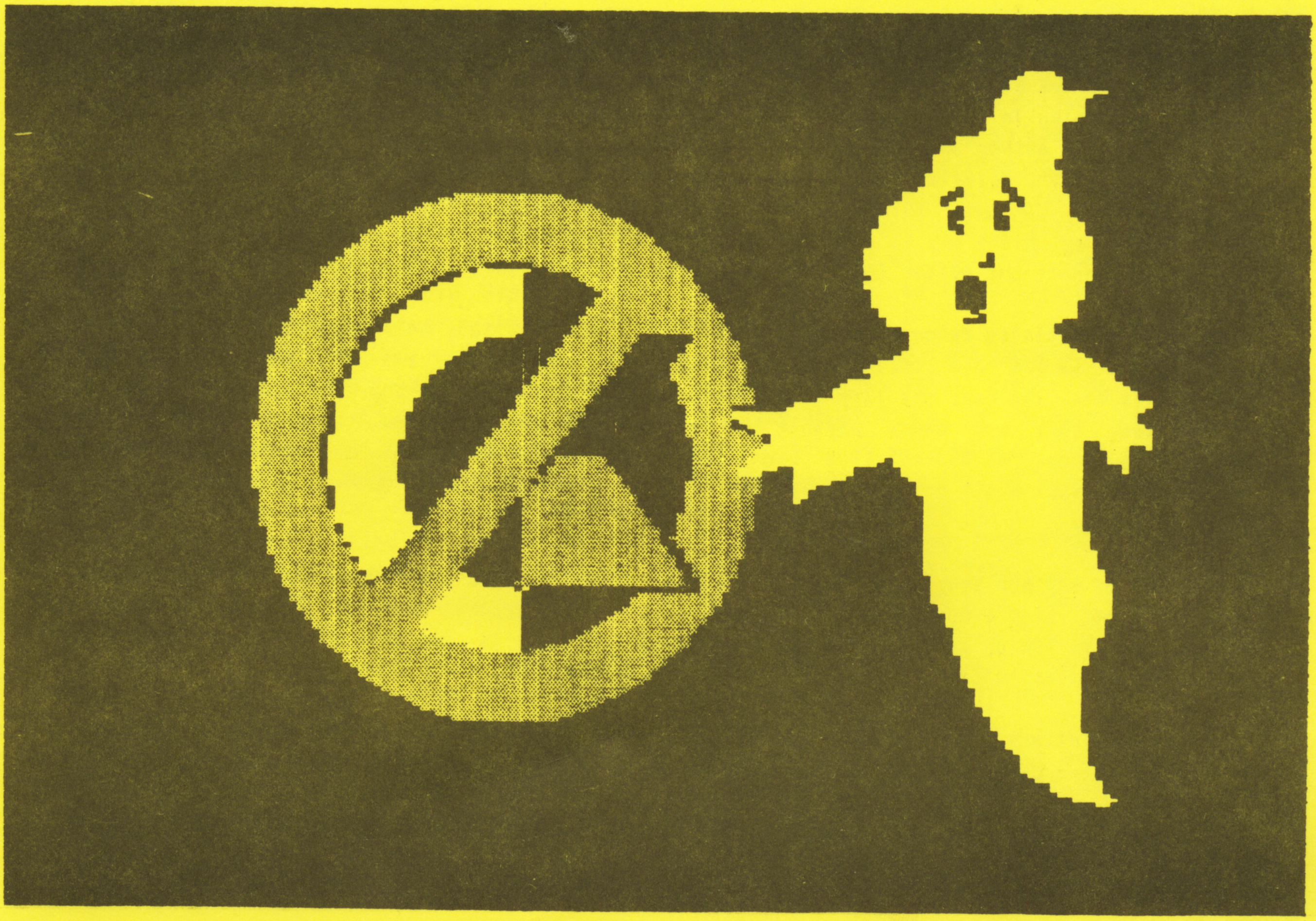
President's Column, Chuck Hall ---------------- 1
Membership Secretary Notes -------------------- 2
Board Meeting Notes, Dan Gibson --------------- 3
Special Interest Groups, Thomas Brown --------- 3
Beginner's SIG, Elanna Schlichting ------------ 4
SIG Contact List ------------------------------ 4
PAC Help Hotlines ----------------------------- 4
ANTIC Special Reports ------------------------- 5
ANTIC Special Reports ------------------------- 7
Eulogy for a 400, Steve Billings -------------- 9
NCCE Conference, Chris Fouts ----------------- 10
MMG BASIC Commander, Chuck Hall -------------- 11
HomePak, David Pelinka ----------------------- 12
Dealer's Corner ------------------------------ 13
MicroFiler, Clyde Pritchard ------------------ 14
Block I/O with Atari Basic, David Pelinka ---- 16
Parallel Printer Interfaces, Clay Gradis ----- 17

NEXT GENERAL MEETING

MONDAY, MARCH 4, 1985 - 7:00 PM

BPA AUDITORIUM, NE 9TH AND HOLLADAY

PAC BULLETIN BOARD SYSTEM
300 BPS - 24 HRS - 7 DAYS
503-245-9405



PORTLAND ATARI CLUB

(Not affiliated with ATARI, Inc.)

PAC Board of Directors

President:	Chuck Hall	293-0552
Vice President:	Jim Link	232-1138
Secretary/Treasurer:	Dan Gibson	665-6912
Membership Secretary:	Debbie Pritchard	648-0461
Program Director:	Jim Berry	223-3712
Club Librarian:	Lloyd Suiter	648-2274
Special Interest Groups:	Tom Brown	644-6674
Special Projects:	Dave Holliday	642-4717
Newsletter Editor:	Clyde Pritchard	648-0461
Advisor:	Lloyd Suiter	648-2274

PAC NEWSLETTER STAFF / SIG MEMBERS

Clyde Pritchard, Editor - Pat Warnshuis, Editor Emeritus

Steve Billings - Art Director, Final layout
Debbie Billings - Final layout
Larry Brigman - Member
Tom Comerford - Member
Chuck Hall - Technical Editor, Columnist
Jean Hall - Production, Mailing Assistant
Dave Pelinka - Advertising Manager, Columnist
Ruth Pettinger - Mailing Coordinator
Debbie Pritchard - Production Coordinator

This newsletter is written and published by members of the Portland Atari Club (PAC), a group of people with a common interest; the Atari Computer. All articles are written and donated by members or are reprints of public domain material from other groups. Opinions expressed are those of the authors and do not necessarily represent the opinions of PAC or those of any other organization. Material appearing in this newsletter may be reproduced for non-commercial use, providing credit is given to the author and PAC or other originating group. Commercial use must be coordinated through the editor. Material for publication may be submitted in the following formats; Atari DOS II text files, LJK text files, Atari Cassette text files, printed, typewritten, or legible handwritten copy. Media may be sent to the editor at the address below and will be returned to the submitter. Contact the editor for instructions on uploading submissions to the PAC BBS.

Commercial Advertising rates are; full page (7 X 9 1/2) - $50, half page (7 X 4 1/2) - $25, quarter page (3 1/4 X 4 1/2)- $15. Ads must be prepaid and a 1/3 discount is given for 3 consecutive ads. The copy may vary in content, but the space must be the same in each issue. Send camera ready copy and check payable to PAC at the address below. Contact David Pelinka, Advertising Manager at 503-659-1969 (evenings) or the Editor for other arrangements. Ad deadline is the 5th of the month prior to publication. Only Authorized Atari Dealers may advertise Atari brand products.

Membership is $20 per year and includes a subscription to this newsletter and access to members only functions. Single copy price of the newsletter is $2. General meetings are open to the public and are held at 7PM on the 1st Mon. of each month (2nd Mon. in the case of holidays) on the date and at the location listed on the cover of this newsletter.

Exchange newsletters, articles, correspondence and ads should be sent to the following address:
Portland Atari Club, Attention: (appropriate board member), P.O. Box 1692, Beaverton, OR 97005

Printing done by SAME DAY PRINTING, 2528 S.W. Spring Garden Street, Portland -- 244-1146

CLUB BUSINESS AND ACTIVITIES

PRESIDENT'S COLUMN
Chuck Hall

I was really astonished by the appearance of so many new people at the last meeting. We had increased our membership by 26 before the evening was over. This put us at 399 family memberships. We then had one more sign up at IB computers a couple of days later which put us at 400. We had just over 400 at the end of last year, and now have made a faster recovery than ever before following our usual first-of-the-year drop. I feel very confident that my goal of 500 family memberships by year end is well within reach. But I have to say again that it is you, our current membership that is responsible for this growth. It is your belief that what this club can offer is of benefit to the ATARI owner. I think we should do something really special for our 500th membership. And more important we should do something special for the member responsible for bringing us our 500th member. If you have any ideas on this then please let me know.

Included in this newsletter will be your new membership cards. Each member will now have their own card, but you first have to tell us who your family members are. Those of you who have filled out and returned the family member insert from our last newsletter are getting your cards now. The rest of you will still have to send us the list, give it to one of our board members, or bring it to the meeting in order for us to process it properly.

I have received a lot of questions lately concerning modems. The entire modem industry is undergoing change at this time. Rumors on compuserve have made mention of 1200 baud modems being available for under $100 this year. Price cuts of 20-25% have been announced by major modem manufacturers. I received one ad in the mail from a company that was supplying re-furbished 300/1200 modems for $129 (+$14.95 for a cable, and $5 for shipping and handling). ATARI Corp., has announced that their new modem will sell for under $50, I bought my Mura modem for $50 about a year ago. So those of you who are thinking of upgrading to 1200, or those looking to purchase for the first time, might want to wait just a bit to see what is coming around the bend.

I think it is becoming more and more important that we get some kind of a Special Interest Group going for telecommunications (modem and bulletin board usage). With all of the different types of modems, software, protocols, and types of boards available, it becomes very confusing for someone to make serious decisions about which way to go. I will be working with our SIG coordinator and our SYSOPs to see what we can get going.

And speaking of our new SIG Coordinator, I would like all of you to welcome Tom Brown to our Board of Directors. Tom has been with our club for some time, and now has decided that he would like to play a more participatory role. If you have any ideas or concerns about SIG groups, Tom is the person to go to.

Another newcomer in the spotlight at our last meeting was our latest candidate for Sargeant-at-Arms. His name is Floyd Suiter, the brother of Lloyd Suiter, our disk librarian. We will be talking to Floyd at our next Board Meeting about taking this position on permanantly. His responsiblities will include providing security at the door, keeping the noise down during the meeting, and some other tasks which we will announce once we have made plans. By the way, the noise that is generated by people talking during our meeting is still brought to my attention every meeting. One of the rudest things you can do, is to prevent some one else from hearing what is going on, or to prevent someone else from concentrating on what is going on during a presentation.

After using the SONY projection screen at the last meeting, there was no doubt in my mind that it was the one we wanted. We have purchased that unit plus the screen and it will now be available for all club functions. I will be the contact for its use, and it will be used for club functions only. It will be fully insured as is all of our equipment.

We are giving some thought to having a club picnic sometime this summer. So far we are just thinking about it, so if you have any ideas please let us know. We will have to make up our minds before too long, so that we can find a place large enough to hold all of us.

The announcements from ATARI are still coming hot and neavy. The latest is that the 65XE will not have the parallel port, but that the 130XE will have. On the 130 it will be a cartridge type slot. The 130XEP, the portable will not be manufactured, but that there will be a portable announced in the ST line. The 130XEM has been delayed, and I don't think we will probably see it. With the emphasis being played on the new ST line, we will see little effort being expended on

continued...

the the XE's. ATARI is now beginning to talk about the new 32 bit machines, but not much for details yet. Look for their formal announcement at the Hanover, Germany show in April. There will be more information elsewhere in this newsletter on these new products so I will not dwell on them here.

We did have an opportunity to talk to some of the ATARI brass this past month. Creative Computing has a SIG on Compuserve and held a conference for all who wished to participate. For ATARI there was Sam Tramiel, Sigmund Hartmann, Neil Harris and various other top members of the ATARI organization. Although we got to ask several questions, the answers were the same we had heard before. But then again we tend to keep asking the same questions... One thing that did come out of the conference was that ATARI will definitely look at interfacing the 15 MEG hard disk (hopefully out in August) with all current computers. It will be a serial interface and will reside between your computers serial I/O port and the hard disk device. We will have to wait and see though.

I have sent letters out to 112 different vendors, software developers, hardware manufactures, and others with interest in ATARI. The letters introduce our club and lets them know that we wish to be advised of what products they are coming out with. I have asked for press kits, advance review copies, or whatever else we can have to help keep you, our membership informed.

That's all for this month. We will see you at the next meeting. Keep your ideas and thoughts coming, and don't forget that we are here to help you enjoy your ATARI's even more.

MEMBERSHIP SECRETARY'S NOTES

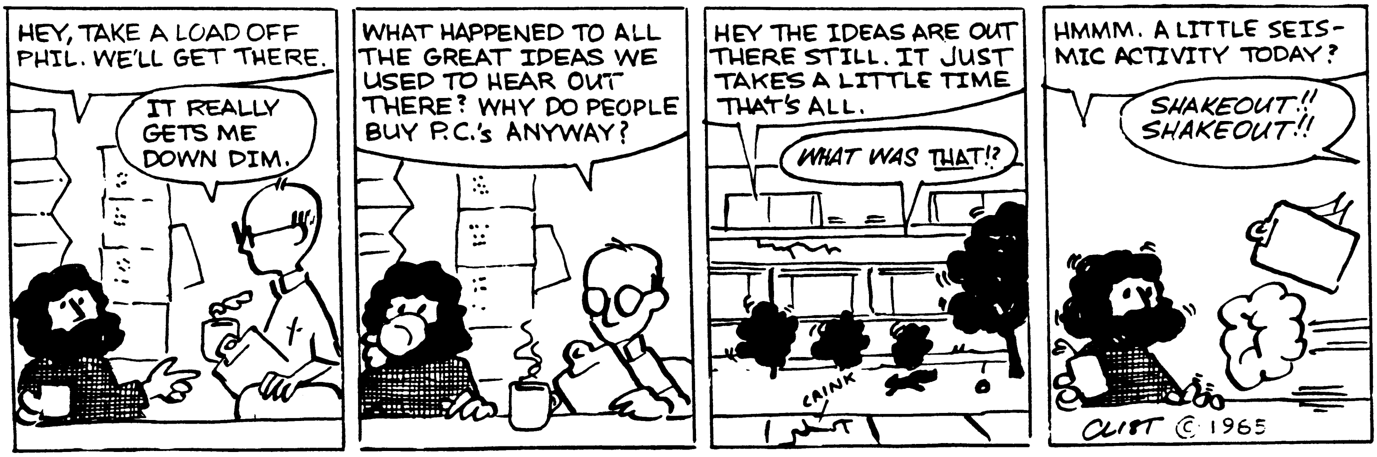
Debbie Pritchard

Once again we had a very good turn out for new members at the monthly meeting. We appreciate your response to our request for names needed on the new membership cards. As you can see they are attached inside this issue. Thank you for your response.

Please join with me in a welcome to these new members:

Ron Weeden & Family
Jon Warren & Family
Don Berger & Family
Stan Hill & Family
David Hein
Brent Dial
Alton Byrd
Willard M. Dewar
Michael Monsen
Steve Kammeyer
George A. Cole
Dean Saminski
David Dillner
Chris Olsen
Ernie Negus
Carl Prehn
Craig Wymetalek & Family
Michael Bogdonoff & Family
Dona Richmond-Eckholt & Family
Gordon Bird & Family
Roger Waite & Family
Joel Hobart & Family
Vickie Noyes & Family
Gerald Dunn & Family
Glenn Place & Family
David Brown & Family
Ken Haarsager & Family
Steve Lambert & Family
James Wanless & Family
Claude Nichols & Family
Michael Martin & Family
Bryant Georgen & Family
Mitch Schreiber & Family
Nolen Handyside & Family
Duane Wentlandt & Family

As of this writing the membership is 399 families, but this figure is subject to change daily. We receive memberships from sources other the the monthly meetings. If you have an friend who would like to join there are other sources where they can obtain an application. Several of the retail stores have our applications on hand and also sell this newsletter. You contact me and I will mail you an application or leave a message on the bulletin board and our sysops will mail you one.


HEY, TAKE A LOAD OFF PHIL. WE'LL GET THERE.
IT REALLY GETS ME DOWN DIM.
WHAT HAPPENED TO ALL THE GREAT IDEAS WE USED TO HEAR OUT THERE? WHY DO PEOPLE BUY P.C.'s ANYWAY?
HEY THE IDEAS ARE OUT THERE STILL. IT JUST TAKES A LITTLE TIME THAT'S ALL.
WHAT WAS THAT!?
CLINK
HMMM. A LITTLE SEISMIC ACTIVITY TODAY?
SHAKEOUT!! SHAKEOUT!!
CLIFT © 1965

BOARD MEETING NOTES

Dan Gibson

The February board meeting was held at 7pm on February 20th at IB Computers. Attending were the following, Jim Link, Clyde and Debbie Pritchard, Chuck and Jean Hall, Dave Holliday, Dan Gibson, Art Cashin, Jim Berry, and Steve and Debbie Billings.

Vancouver Chapter Of PAC

Art Cashin of the newly formed Southwest Washington Atari Group (S.W.A.G.) attended the February Board meeting to discuss its short-term and long-term goals. Short-term goals included a very close association with PAC. All members would also be PAC members and would enjoy the same benefits and pay the normal $20.00 per year dues. This would add about 40 to 50 new members now with a goal of 75 by the end of the year. The group would have a total current membership of 75 to 100 people. Long-term goals would include S.W.A.G. becoming a stand alone club, but still be closely associated with PAC. S.W.A.G.'s immediate needs include a permanent meeting facility, a bulletin board, and a proper coordination with PAC. They are also hoping to provide better documentation for current PAC disks and contribute other programs for future PAC disks. We will be providing pages in the newsletter for S.W.A.G.'s use. The Board appointed three members to form a committee to establish revised charter guidelines to incorporate S.W.A.G.

March Meeting

At the March general meeting Clyde Pritchard will give a review on the Writer's Tool and Bounty Bob Strikes Back. The new PAC disk will be Extended Basic for the 400/800 computers and we will highlight Utilities II. Ernie Negus will demonstrate a new game he has written and has sold to DataSoft called Cornell Road. Chuck will discuss the conference call he participated in on CompuServe with top Atari officials. They will be discussing new Atari products and goals.

Miscellaneous

Floyd Suiter will be acting as master at arms to control membership card check-in and Tom Brown has volunteered for S.I.G. coordinator. Welcome to both of them. We are going to be sending out applications enabling us to issue an I.D. card to each member in a family. We are continuing to persue other avenues of advertising the Portland Atari Club. When products are reviewed for the newsletter, we will be sending a copy of the review to the software publishers. Chuck sent out a letter to several local vendors introducing the PAC and suggesting mutual support for Atari products. We will be purchasing the new Sony projection TV set demonstrated at last month's meeting. Lastly, the Board is considering a PAC picnic - more about this later.

Treasurer's Report

As of this writing, the balance in our checking account stands at $5,354, which includes $3,080 for the big screen TV. At the last meeting software sales totaled $248 and T-shirt sales were $20

****

SPECIAL INTEREST GROUPS

Thomas Brown

My family and I moved to the Portland area seven years ago. We got our ATARI computer in 1981 and became acquainted with PAC a year later. I have made some very good friends in PAC and have received much valuable information from the meetings. PAC is a very good group of people with much knowledge and experience within its membership. I would like to give something back to the group by serving as SIG Coordinator. These are exciting times at ATARI and for ATARI owners. With these new machines will come new software and hardware for us to figure out and use. Maybe a new SIG is needed: think about it. There are seven SIGS up and running - I would like to see that number increase. That is where information flows.

When I first joined PAC I had many, many questions about the ATARI computers. The answers to those questions were found at PAC. As you and I move up the ladder of computing we will have questions of a more advance nature. The answers to those advanced questions are out there in our PAC membership.

I would like to see the QUESTION and ANSWER part of our general meeting expanded to include more in-depth answers to some of the questions. I also would like to see each SIG Leader have a time-slot to take questions from the floor. This not only would give them visibility, it would generate ideas from the general membership.

If you have any questions about, or ideas for Special Interest Groups, please let me know.

BEGINNER'S SIG

Elanna Schlichting

We had to delay the Feb. meeting a few days due to the weather, but it was well worth the wait! Debbie Pritchard came to demonstrate AtariWriter to us. And what a demo it was! She took us from startup procedures to a demo. of the mail-merge function and covered everything in between. She told us to begin by **reading the manual,** saying that it was simple and well worth the short time needed to read it. Then she discussed how to produce a document, taking time to answer questions on each step as she went along. This was a "you had to be there" evening, but if there is a demand for a repeat or further information evening, Debbie has offered to return. Let us know.

The mid-month meeting was again an informal one with a smaller group just bringing questions and copying public domain software. Chris Fouts and Scott Burr were on hand to give experienced advice. Scott gave us several interesting Poke locations to play with as well as some USR code definitions. We also learned a simple way to punch notches for using the back side of a disk using only a hole punch. Simply place two disks back to back and use the notches on each side as guides for placement and depth as you punch. Chris Fouts, by the way, has an excellent source for public domain software, the San Mateo Co. Office of Education and Computer Using Educators Softswap. Each disk costs $10. The software is very good and is easy to use. You can switch from game to game without having to go to DOS. The big plus on these disks is that once you have paid for them, you are told, repeat told, to copy them and give them away. You are not allowed to sell them. Big switch there!

The March meeting gave members the chance to view the PAC Bulletin Board System in action. Our Sysops, Steve and Debbie Billings, gave us over an hour's worth of time to explore the various aspects of the Board. We had an MPP1000c and a Homepak/1030 system to check out, and had the chance to discuss and compare some of the modem systems. A special note about the meetings: our vice-president, Jim Link, has attended several of our recent meetings and we appreciate his help and support.

The next meeting will be Mar. 19. Call me for details. And a final note about the subjects we cover: If you have questions that are not being answered in the meetings, let me know. It is more than likely that they will be the basis for a future Beginner's Meeting.

SIG CONTACT LIST

The following is a list of our current groups and the contacts for each:

ADVENTURE GAMES	Russ Schwartz	646-6418
SIGASM (ASSEMBLER)	Clyde Pritchard	648-0461
ATR-8000	Jim Scott	281-6724
BEGINNERS	Elanna Schlichting	285-4471
BULLETIN BOARD	Steve & Debbie Billings	246-1751
BUSINESS APPLICATIONS	Chuck Hall	293-0552
NLSIG (NEWSLETTER)	Clyde Pritchard	648-0461
PACE (Portland Atari Club Educators)	Trudie Mishler	230-9545
	Chris Fouts	206-687-4951

****

PAC HELP HOTLINES

The following people have generously offered to take telephone queries in the areas indicated.

Adventure Games	Russell Schwartz	646-6418
Assembly Language	Leroy Baxter	653-1633
BASIC Programming	Nick Yost	981-0838
	Lee Gassaway	642-2455
BBS Usage	Russell Schwartz	646-6418
Cassette Operation	Lee Gassaway	642-2455
DOS Operations	Gary Lippert	233-7069
FORTH Programming	Ricky Wooldridge	224-7163
Hardware Operation	Gary Lippert	233-7069
Modem Operations	Gary Lippert	233-7069
Operating System	Nick Yost	981-0838
	Leroy Baxter	653-1633

NEWS AND REVIEWS

ANTIC SPECIAL REPORTS

ANTIC Publishing Inc., Copyright 1985.
Reprinted by Permission.

8 ATARI Execs Meet User Group
Production 520ST & 130XE Shown
April In-store Delivery Pledged

By Michael Ciraolo, ANTIC Associate Editor

San Leandro, Calif.-- A panel of eight Atari executives headed by AtariSoft President Sig Hartmann demonstrated production units of the new XE and ST computers at the San Leandro Computer Club on March 5 and pledged that the powerful new machines will be on retail shelves in April.

According to research and development vice president Shiraz Shivji, the new 16-bit ST computers will be shipped with Logo, but users will have to buy BASIC separately. However, other Atari spokesmen later told Antic privately that the decision not to include BASIC may still be changed.

Atari has also postponed plans to produce an 8-bit portable computer, due to lack of interest. Instead there will be a 16-bit portable ST.

Also, plans for an XEM 8-bit music computer have been postponed indefinitely due to problems with finalizing the AMY sound chip.

Shivji and John Feagans, who is responsible for the 16-bit computer's operating system, held the audience spellbound as they demonstrated the incredibly fast color window/icon/mouse abilities of the ST -- dubbed the "Jackintosh" for its resemblance to Apple's Macintosh.

Feagans and Shivji also wowed the computer club by displaying the entire palette of 512 colors simultaneously on the ST.

"It's taken seven or eight months to develop, but it's real! The plastic is real! We're doing everything we can to get you the STs," Hartmann said.

"We believe it's faster than the IBM AT," Shivji said. "I think this'll be one of the sweetest machines for hackers."

Shivji said the chips in the new computers are soldered, not socketed. He encouraged expansion of the STs through the Direct Memory Access port, which he said transfers data at 10 megabits per second. He also said the largest ROM cartridge the STs can accept is 128K.

Hartmann presented much of the standard New Atari rhetoric. "We want a lot closer ties to user groups. We're interested in better communications, helping fix problems and hearing criticism," he told the audience of 200.

In an unprecedented display of corporate openness, Hartmann was joined by the software product manager for the XEs, the product manager for the STs, the head of ST OS/GEM development, Atari's general counsel, and the vice presidents of finance and research and development, and the editor of the Atari Explorer. The entire group answered questions for over two hours.

Atari is currently selling a professional development package for the 16-bit computers, said Hartmann. For $4,500, a developer will receive an ST computer, an RGB color monitor and a high resolution monochrome monitor, two 3.5-inch disk drives and C tools, including a compiler, linker, loader, assembler, debugger, editor, uploader/downloader and full technical specifications.

Atari is also seeking qualified people to write and test software for the new 8-bit XE machines, according to Hartmann.

"The 8-bit line is still alive and well. All new software will run on the 800XL and 65XE, but will automatically look for and use the extra 64K RAM in the 130XE," said John Skruch, software product manager for the 8-bit line.

"Private software developers are already writing for the XEs. Hayden Software is converting Sargon III, the chess program," Skruch said.

Richard Fricke said he expects to have 25 to 30 software packages on sale when the STs are released in April.

Fricke, Hartmann's second-in-command, also promised that the XEs are more solid than the 800XL. "If you lift your 800XL one foot above a table and drop it -- gently -- you'd probably lose an AtariWriter file. That won't happen with the XEs."

Although Atari chairman Jack Tramiel previously said he would sell no software for over $49, Hartmann now said that no software would cost more than $100, but most Atari software would still retail below $50.

Those packages will include home productivity, business, education and entertainment software, in order of importance to the new Atari Corp, Fricke said.

At the April computer fair in Hanover, Germany, Jack Tramiel will announce a true 32-bit microcomputer, and will also demonstrate the Local Area Network capability of the 8-bit and 16-bit Ataris, according to Hartmann.

continued...

Using the Infinity integrated software package from Matrix Systems, the XEs and STs will support up to 255 Atari terminals linked in a LAN through joystick ports, said Fricke.

The 16-bit ST computers are based on a Motorola 68000 chip running at 8 MHz. These machines will include a keyboard processor chip, which also controls two joysticks or the two-key mouse that is included with the computer.

In addition to joystick and mouse ports, the STs have a cartridge slot, a hard disk port, a floppy disk port, RS-232 and Centronics interfaces, two monitor connections, an RF port for hooking up TV sets, and MIDI (Musical Instrument Digital Interface) in/out ports, said the Atari panel.

The 16-bit 520ST has 512K memory and will cost $599. The 130ST with 128K memory will retail for $399. A 500K microfloppy disk drive will also be available for under $200, said Hartmann.

As previously announced, the 16-bit ST computers will function in any one of three resolution modes. Using a 320 x 200 dot resolution, each dot may be one of 16 colors. In the 640 x 200 resolution, four colors per dot are possible. A monochrome mode offers 640 x 400 dot resolution.

Sig Hartmann and other top Atari executives will meet with officers of users groups from all over the country at 4 p.m. on March 30 in Antic's offices as part of the magazine's third anniversary celebration. More details will be available on CompuServe soon.

At
CompuSource

Our commitment begins before the sale...

Finally... Support for the home user!

- Support for home, business, education
- Word processing for correspondence
- Home accounting and financial planning
- Resource material from data banks
- Hours of enjoyment and pleasure

We offer:

- Comprehensive training
- Extensive hardware and software selection
- You try the hardware and software before your buy!

Exclusive Software Exchange Guarantee*

When you hold a software package in your hand, you have an idea of how it should work. But, before you take it home and test your application, you must spend your money.

At CompuSource we say, purchase the software, take it home, and test your application. Take up to 30 days if you like. If the software isn't what you wanted it to be, just return it to our store in salable condition and get yourself an exchange.

*offer not extended to game programs

Dealer for—
Atari
Commodore
Columbia
Sanyo
Percom
Indus
Hayes
MSD
Amdec
Zenith
Juki
Panasonic
Gemini
Legend
& Mannesman-Tally

Plus Furniture from
Gusdorf &
O'Sullivan

I-205 Commerce Center at Mill Plain, Vancouver, WA
CompuSource
(206) 254-5849

ANTIC SPECIAL REPORTS

ANTIC Publishing Inc., Copyright 1985.
Reprinted By Permission.

GEM Seminar Report

By Nat Friedland, ANTIC Editor

Antic was the **only** Atari Magazine present at the GEM Software Developers Seminar held in Monterey by Digital Research, Inc. last month.

Probably of greatest interest to Antic readers would be what we learned in conversation with the five Atari technical executives who were on hand...

First of all, Atari still considers itself to be on schedule for bringing the first production ST computers onto the market in April. Full ST production capacity won't be reached until June.

The 10-15 megabyte hard disk for the ST will show up in the summer. This is essentially the same schedule Antic reported at the January Consumer Electronics show. What's significant NOW is that none of the normal debugging problems associated with new machines are expected by Atari to hold up the ST significantly.

ATARI CAD/CAM -- UNDER $2000?

Remember the legend-shrouded 32-bit Atari we reported that Jack Tramiel talked about at his November press conference? Well, it hasn't drifted off to Computer Wish Heaven.

Every time an Atari engineer talked about the 32-bit computer in Monterey, a delighted smile appeared on his face. The computer was described to Antic as a "VAX minicomputer on a chip" and a "40,000 CAD/CAM computer graphics workstation that will sell for under $2,000.

And Atari still hopes to meet Jack's stated goal of unveiling this machine at the April electronics fair in Hanover, Germany.

Advance ST Copies

Antic has signed up to purchase one of the first pre-production prototypes of the ST. It's supposed to be available at the beginning of March. These prototypes are being hand-wired and Atari says they'll be sold at whatever is the final break-even price.

The next batch of advance ST units will be "editors' review packages" that are supposed to ship at the end of March or the beginning of April. After that, the availability of STs depends on whether or not a store near you signs to get one of the first allocations.

ATARI Acceptance

As for the GEM Seminar itself, the $800 Feb. 14-15 workshop was highly technical and directed at professional consumer-software programmers who were thoroughly experienced with the C language or with Macintosh window program development.

Interestingly, within this sophisticated and hard-nosed environment, the name Atari was mentioned often and each time it was treated with respect as a credible factor in the software marketplace. This certainly would not have been the case less than a year ago.

At a well-attended evening reception there was available for hands-on examination a working ST with a preliminary version of Atari GEM burned into ROM as an EPROM.

Before you could handle the ST, you had to sign a confidentiality pledge which also gave you a very sketchy early draft of the official Atari software development documentation, and official status on the list of certified Atari software developers. There was a long line waiting to sign and most of the Seminar's 200 attendees did commit to develop ST software.

Learning About GEM

The Seminar sessions were taken up with highly detailed discussions of GEM development nuts and bolts such as the strict interfacing procedures which are supposed to make porting GEM-based programs between different computers a routinely mechanical one-day process.

Of course, the main selling point of GEM is that it's supposed to make it simple to convert software between the IBM PC and its clones, the Macintosh, the Atari ST and any other computer the GEM licenses a version for.

Access to GEM windows, debugging, and correct embedding of transfer hooks were among the other technical topics discussed. All attendees were given the two-volume GEM Toolkit documentation. DRI's recommended professional development language was Lattice C, which costs around $500.

For those who don't realize this, it should be noted that the Seminar was specifically dealing with the just-completed IBM PC version of GEM. Six-disk beta test editions of GEM were being sold to developers by DRI for $500. The GEM Library software of prepared graphics routines cost extra.

Nobody was claiming that the Atari version of GEM was ready for beta testing at the time of the Seminar.

continued...

Wetmore Sums Up

Russ Wetmore, author of HOMEPAK and PREPPIE as well as other major Atari programs, flew in from his Florida homebase to attend the seminar and then stayed on to see the MacWorld Show in San Francisco.

He spent time at Antic during this period and shared with us the viewpoints of a highly experienced Atari professional programmer.

"I think the developers at the Seminar fell into two groups. One group is totally sold on the GEM goal of making a lot of different computers compatible with each other," said Wetmore. "And they are willing to overlook some nagging questions that came up during the sessions."

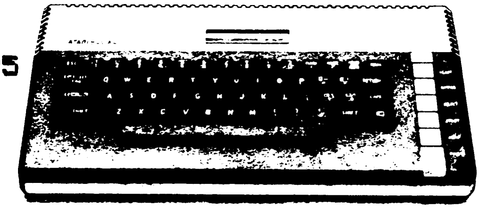
Wetmore considers himself part of the second group, which is taking more of a wait-and-see attitude. "GEM does not seem to have all the built-in features of the Macintosh interface," he said. "This is going to put a lot more demands on a commercial programmer. For example, I don't see that GEM has any built-in text editor."

He also expressed doubt that porting GEM programs between different computer models will be as cut-and-dried as DRI claims. "The conversion routines have a LOT of machine language and it just does not look that straightforward to me," he said.

And Wetmore wasn't too happy about the licensing fees for developers that DRI announced at the end of the Seminar. "The basic agreement is $1,000 for the first 10,000 copies of your program and then it's renegotiable. There's nothing to prevent DRI from cutting itself in as your partner if you come up with a smash hit program," he said.

Still, Wetmore was positive enough about GEM that he bought the Seminar disks and intends to invest over $5,000 for an enhanced IBM PC and Lattice C. "But right now any GEM programs I publish will just be for the Atari," he said, "because it's the only computer that a developer won't have to pay royalties to DRI."

SUPPORT
IS
EVERYTHING
Print Shop-$39.95
297-8425
IB COMPUTERS
CEDAR HILLS SHOPPING CENTER
ATARI
WE KNOW ATARIS
800XL $99.95
PREVIOUSLY OWNED ATARI 800'S
ATARI 1050 DISK DRIVES-$189.95
INDUS DISK DRIVES SOFTWARE
SPARTA DOS:
$249.95
$39.95



SAVE $$$
SWP
ATR 8000
LEGEND 880 PRINTERS SALE $249.95
US DOUBLER FOR ATARI 1050: $69.95
TANDON & OTHER DRIVES DS $199.95 CASE EXTRA
SPECIAL PURCHASE SAVE NOW SS $ 99.95 CASE EXTRA
SYNCALC $49.95
SYNFILE $49.95
SYNTREND $49.95
ATARIWRITER $54.95
MINDSET
SALES AND SERVICE
NOW INCLUDING
REPAIR SERVICE BY
MICRO SYSTEMS SUPPORT

EULOGY FOR A 400

Steve Billings

Lo, tho we type into the sector that will not read, we shall fear no power outage. For Diskey is the answer and power shall return from whence it was lost.

Oh, excuse me. I am feeling a little sad this month, an old friend passed on recently and I am still a little shaken up. Yes, it was my old (really not all that old) Atari 400.

By old I mean that I learned a lot and had many a trial and tribulation with the 400, but at the same time got to know its guts pretty good and even managed to like it sometimes. Well, I guess I am getting a little sentimental, but darn it all it was a fine little micro.

I first met the 400 at a video store where it was set up next to a Vic and each had a game playing on it, I don't remember what was on the Vic, but the Atari had on Star Raiders. I was sold immediately, but I asked some dumb questions anyway. The salesman was helpful and told me what a great choice I was making, and how superior the Atari was to the CBM computer. Salesman, where are you when we need you?

Have you ever tried typing on a membrane keyboard? Hopefully, now that progress has marched on, you will never have to endure such a torture. I did. I typed long listings on the 400 and saved them onto cassette tapes that it could never read again, it was real fun. I fixed it up though, the first addition to the 400 was a real keyboard. Not one of those fake B-Keyboards, but a real one just like on an 800. It stuck up on top like a wart on baby's behind, and it was a little awkward to type on, but compared to the membrane it was perfect. The next thing I did was learn how to type.

At this point I was still fighting the cassette player. If you have never typed in a long listing, spent hours correcting typos, and then carefully typed "CSAVE" instead of "CLOAD", then waited 15 minutes for it to save to tape, then tried to reload it the next day only to find an "ERROR 143" 14 minutes into the playback, then you do not know what the value of a disk drive is.

I'm getting a little ahead of my story. Before you can add a disk drive you need more memory of course. At least 32k, minimum. Now we really get to see into the soul of the machine. All those little itty bitty wires and plastic chips and stuff. Well you don't need to know what they are, just follow the directions in the book, it's easy. The hard part is taking it all back apart several times to find out why it doesn't work right without losing any little screws or your patience.

After several more months of going to work to build up more capital, I figured it's time to get that disk drive. Too bad they're out of stock and no one knows when there will be another shipment, go home and play with your cassette recorder.

OK, sooner or later, I have that disk drive and I really have a system. But wait, is 32K really enough, what about all those games that require 48K? Is it worth opening the case up again? Silly questions again. All the good games in the catalogs require 48K, so 64K it is. The microwave oven can wait awhile longer at the store, they'll probably come out with a better one that interfaces with a computer soon anyway.

Where am I now? Oh yes, I of course need a printer and a modem. Wait a minute, this story is supposed to be about an Atari 400 computer. I am getting far afield talking about all these peripherals, but why not they were its friends too. So, a printer and a modem. Done. What more could an 400 want?

To tell the truth the 400 was satisfied, but not me. More disks, more joysticks, a rollerball, a Koala pad, an interface, another disk drive, a phone dialer, another monitor, cartridges, files, a desk, another printer, books, books, and more games.

Everything was going great. Then one day the 400 would not talk to the disk drive any more, in fact it wouldn't talk to anything I hooked into it. All those things and they wouldn't talk at all.

What can I say, I was back to the day this had all started. Talk about a feeling of being cut off from fantasy. No more adventures, no more space battles, no more balancing budgets that will never balance again. This could not last. I immediately borrowed an Atari 800 from a person who has too many until I could get my bearings and navigate out of the dense fog I found myself foundering in.

The options were numerous. Keep the 800 until Chuck forgot about it, tell him it was stolen and the insurance company offered $100, or maybe I just don't like 800s so much anyway. I could fix the 400, but that would probably cost more just to find out what was wrong with it then to buy a new old 400 and transfer all the gizmos. Another possibility was to get a new 800XL. The price was all the way down to under $100, and maybe they were not as bad as they say they are. Well this short pointless story is pointy enough and to make

continued...

a short story short, this is coming to you via an Atari 800XL. I like it. The 400 is sitting over in the corner starting to turn into dust. I don't know what I will do with the 400 yet, I can't throw it away, and it is too ugly to hang on the wall. I am starting to get misty again so I had better hang it up for now. I will let you know if I can find a proper way to enshrine the old boy. See you next month.

****

NCCE CONFERENCE

Chris Fouts

The Northwest Council for Computer Education conference was held in Eugene, OR, on Feb. 8-9. Full and half day workshops were held the day before. The conference theme was "Computers in Education: What's Next?" To attend a conference dedicated to computers in education was a real treat for me both professionally and personally. The conference was outstanding in all respects, i.e., organization, cost, and quality. The following are my experiences and impressions from the conference.

The pre-conference workshops on Thursday filled quickly and although I went to my fourth choice, it was excellent. The workshop was held on the U of O campus and was on D-Base III on the IBM PC. I found the program to be extremely powerful and relatively easy to use. I say relatively, because I have had previous experience with data bases and D-Base can get quite involved. We set up a number of small data bases and manipulated the data. For instance, we set the program up to print mailing labels, three across. I especially liked the "browse" command which allowed the data to be viewed and entered in columns. Transferring information from one file to another was easily done and the field names did not have to be the same. The reporting capabilites seemed complete, but in a three hour workshop, with two people per computer, we were not able to cover it thoroughly. The pgm requires 256k, lists at $695, and I did not see the manual and therefore cannot comment on it. I have since been told that 256 does not leave much for data, 320k is recommended. These factors put it in a definite "you better really need it to afford it" category, but I loved it!!

The conference on Friday and Saturday consisted of one hour sessions with half hour breaks. There were five sessions per day, with a total of 107 different sessions. This made choosing a session difficult at times, but all conferences should have it so rough. I was with four other people from my school district, so we made a game plan the night before to assure we would have someone at all the sessions we really wanted. With the exception of one, the seven sessions I attended were great.

My first session, "Simple Computer Controlled Robots for the Classroom", was put on by Bob Wong of Lake Oswego J.H.S. and OMSI. He defines a robot as "a programmable automated machine". His creation consisted of a VIC 20 computer, the necessary circuitry and relay switches, plywood, three wheels (two motor driven), and a motor cycle battery. The whole thing was about two cubic feet. The cost was about $90, not including the VIC. Why the VIC? OMSI had them from days gone by, so why not use them? Programmed in BASIC by Bob, the robot could accept and remember a series of forward, backward, right, and left commands. It could also be driven (controlled) with a joy stick. Since the VIC got power from the battery, the robot was independent, except when connected to the monitor to see the program (and your series of commands). The eight pins of the VIC's I/O port can each transmit 5 volts. With pokes in BASIC, the individual pins can be turned on or off. The 5 volts were connected to relay switches which in turn connect the battery power to the motor, and away you go! This explanation is simplified, but you get the idea. Bob recommended three books to get you started.

How To Make Computer Controlled Robots, Usborne Publishing

Robillard, Mark J., Microprocessor Based Robotics, Sams & Co., Inc., Indianapolis, Indiana 1983

Potter, Tony and Guild, Ivor, Robotics, Usborne Publishing Ltd., London England 1983

MMG BASIC COMMANDER

Chuck Hall

This is the second product from MMG Micro Software that I am reviewing. After doing the BASIC Debugger last month, this program was a little bit of a let down, but there are some nice features. For the person doing a lot of BASIC programming this program could prove to be quite beneficial.

The program has 7 basic functions and I will briefly describe each of them.

(1). Automatic Line Number Generator - That pretty well describes it. You specify the increment and starting number and the program then will prompt you with line numbers. It will not over-write any existing line numbers in use (unless it is the first line you specify) which is a nice feature. If you do attempt to over-write an existing line number then this option will be exited. The default if you do not specify the parameters is 10,10. To enter this mode you use the START key.

(2). Renumbering - You can renumber all lines of your BASIC program using the same command structure as above (increment, start). You have to be careful not to use too large an increment. I tried some pretty large ones, and the numbering went crazy. It seemed to happen only when I used increments larger than 128. If you use the normal of 10,20,50 and etc., you should have no problems. GOTO, GOSUB, TRAP, RESTORE, IF...THEN, and all other references will be changed also. But only if you specify the line numbers you are transferring control to. If you use a variable name such as - GOTO PRINTIT -, the line numbers where this occurs will be printed on your screen, alerting you to the fact that you will have to make these changes yourself. You use the SELECT key to enter this function.

(3). Block Delete - By entering the beginning and ending line numbers of a block of code you want deleted and hitting RETURN, you have instantly deleted a block of code. The OPTION key enters this function.

(4). Programmed Keys - The following list depicts special control-key commands which are supported.

^S	Save	SAVE "D:
^E	Enter	ENTER "D:
^O	Output	LIST "D:
^P	Print	? #6;"
^L	Load	LOAD "D:
^G	Go	RUN "D:

^V Variables - List all variables used in your program and the total count. To use any of these control keys just depress the the CTRL key, and while holding it down, hit the the corresponding letter for the function you wish. It will then print on your screen the commands listed on the right.

(5). Programmable Keys - You can specify 3 additional control keys for your your own functions. You use ^Q to enter the function and when the program asks you to select you key, you enter A,B, or C and then RETURN. You will then be prompted for your statement which may have a maximum of 36 characters, or you may combine all three for a maximum of 108 characters.

(6). DOS functions - The following DOS functions are available from this program:

^D	Directory	lists disk directory
^K	locK	protects your file on disk
^U	Unlock	unprotects file
^X	delete	Deletes the file
^R	Rename	renames the file
^F	Format	formats your disk.

These functions will save you from having to make additional trips to the DOS on your disk in the middle of writing your program.

If you wish to use the actual control character generated from you keyboard when you use the control key, you can toggle off the control functions in this program with CTRL-0 (the number). And since this is a toggle, you can go back and forth. There is also a help file available by typing in RUN "D:HELP" and pressing RETURN.

The program has some nice functions. Before I would buy it, I would check out the market and see if there was anything out there even more powerful. The program has been around for awhile, and in the documentation they make provisions for upgrades, but I have not heard of any yet. The main reason I am reviewing this program at this time, is for the great number of beginners we have recently welcomed to the club. For those of you who do a lot of programming or keying in of programs from magazine articles and then trying to enhance or clean them up, this program could be a welcome addition to your library. Again this program is available at IB Computers for $31.95.

Editor's Note: I'm sure Chuck knows this, but if you want more features in BASIC, your best bet is probably BASIC XL from OSS. It has all of the things mentioned except the programmable keys, and has some other great features.

HOMPAK

David Pelinka

HomePak brings the concept of integrated applications software to Atari and while it's not a breakthrough; it does provide a useful introduction to word processing, telecommunications and information management. You won't get the most powerful programs available for the Atari, but they are for the most part well-designed and easy to use and come on one disk for a reasonable $50. They were all written by Russ Wetmore and are distributed by Batteries Included.

The three programs in the package are called **HomeText** (word processing), **HomeTerm** (communications) and **HomeFind** (information management). Each program appears on the main menu and can be run with a single keystroke. HomeText will work with any printer connected to an 850 or a serial-to-parallel interface. HomeTerm works with any modem connected to an 850 as well as the Atari 835 and 1030 direct connect modems. It is also supposed to work with the MPP 1000-C modem, but judging by the comments in the Compuserve Atari SIG, it may take you awhile to set it up properly. HomeFind requires a separate blank disk for data which is not compatible with DOS or any other data storage system. The package requires a minimum of 48K of memory.

HomeText uses menus for almost all of its commands which makes it especially easy to use. You won't have to re-learn a bunch of command codes every time you run it. It also contains many fancy features too numerous to mention. But all this does not come without a price; you only have 6K of free memory to write in. This corresponds to about 3 double-spaced pages. (In spite of the fact that the manual says there should be 8350 free bytes, I could only get 6620 on both an 800 and an 800XL. Compare this with the 20K of Atariwriter.) If you write larger files you must break them up and chain them at printing time. This is not difficult, but is a bit of a nuisance.

In addition to the normal text entry screen, there is a function menu which contains the file handling commands, a printer format menu which contains commands for controlling the appearance of the final printout, and a block manipulation menu for block move, delete, copy as well as searching for a text string.

The printer format commands are inserted into the text as actual command words in inverse video instead of the usual control codes. For example, center-text appears as CNTR and a change of the left margin as LEFT (value). Commands which toggle on and off like bold print are shown with a right arrow when turned on and a left arrow when turned off to indicate the text affected. This makes it easy to see what the current printer settings are, but the codes do take up quite a bit of room in the display. Although HomeText will edit just about any ASCII text file, other control codes will cause strange results. HomeText does not contain specific printer drivers, but rather lets you set 3 types of special characters for your printer and save them to disk. The three are BOLD, EXTENDED and UNDERLINE. Any other modes must be selected by imbedding the actual control code in the text.

The print preview mode shows a graphic picture of an entire page with widths of up to 158 characters and page lengths of up to 88 lines. Dotted lines represent each line of text. Extended and bold lines are shown in blue and underlined words have a green line beneath them. The shortage of free memory prevents print-preview from being usable on the text in memory. You must clear memory and use the "include" command to call up the file from disk. If you're experimenting this means you have to re-save your text file, clear memory, use the include command, and then select print preview each time you change something. Too bad, because it's a useful feature. Of the many additional features, I liked the left hand margin toggle which gives you two extra positions on the screen, the keyclick toggle, and the toggle between insert and replace modes. The modified character set which is used in all three programs is cute, but is sometimes annoying.

HomeTerm is modeled on the public domain program AMODEM. It does almost everything AMODEM does and adds some additional features. HomeTerm communicates in Ascii, Atascii or Compuserve's Vidtex modes in 300 or 1200 baud, and will upload and download files in capture or XMODEM protocol. Two of the additional features are a real-time clock, and an edit window that lets you type and correct up to 120 characters of text before sending it. This is especially handy if you're conversing with someone else in real-time and are not a great typist. The files submenu contains commands to view directories, copy, delete, rename, lock, unlock files, and format a disk, all without disconnecting. You can also define 10 macros to contain logon commands for your favorite bulletin boards. Each macro can contain up to 70 characters, and one macro may call another. You can send just about any sequence except, unfortunately, an Atascii return. This means you can't automatically logon to the PAC BBS in Atascii mode. HomeTerm does not support auto-dialing, but if you have an autodial modem, you can type the number in from the keyboard. HomeTerm's buffer size is a little smaller that AMODEM's (7720 for HT vs. 13184 for AM), but it's not a real hindrance since the buffer dumps to disk automatically when full.

HomeTerm uses parity ignore, 1 stop-bit protocol which cannot be changed by the user. It will always send a line-feed after a carriage-return, and this prevents communication in some Ascii combinations. I found I could not communicate with TELENET at all with HomeTerm. To get around this problem, the author has written a customizer program which solves this deficiency as well as adding some new features. This program is called HTCUST and is available for free download on the PAC BBS and Compuserve. In addition to controlling automatic line-feed, the customizer program lets you change handlers, key repeat rate, XON/XOFF protocol, character sets, and bell prompts. Another feature not mentioned in the manual is the ability to give HomeTerm commands with a joystick. Each direction corresponds to a single keystroke and the button adds a fifth. The default settings are RETURN (button), CTRL-Q (forward), CTRL-S (back), macro 5 (left), and CTRL-P (right). HTCUST allows you to change these commands. To customize your copy of HomeTerm you make a backup copy of the disk and the customizer program modifies that copy. I found it convenient to put an unmodified copy on one side of a disk and a modified copy on the other. HTCUST is well-written and documented and complements HomeTerm nicely.

HomeFind strikes me as a minor disaster. It is not a database by any stretch of the imagination. The author describes it as a "natural language information manager" and his intention was to avoid the rigid framework of "fields" and the complexity of typical databases. Unfortunately he has succeeded in avoiding the power of a database as well. He replaces the record/field organization of a database with something called "subject's tag's object". A typical entry would be, "Mike's Birthday's April 18, 1958". You would retrieve this data by asking "Who's Mike?". You can't sort or organize the data, and the only output you can get is a printed copy of the questions and answers. There is some provision for merging data with HomeText. I don't know if this is easier for beginners to understand or not, but I guarantee you won't hear this terminology anywhere else. Since I'm obviously biased towards the more universal and complex database systems, I won't say much more about HomeFind except that in the field of home data management it's a real dead end.

To summarize, I was not as impressed with HomePak's individual programs as I expected to be, but as a package it's a good value. It should be of special interest to new Atari owners or those who have not delved into word processing, communications or data management before. To these people it provides an easy to use set of programs that will let them accomplish their tasks with a minimum of study. For those with more need, it provides a good groundwork from which to evaluate and grow into more complex programs.

****

*Compusource
11504 Mill Plain Suite C
Vancouver, WA 98684
(206) 254-5849

*Computerland
(Meier and Frank Dwtn)
621 SW 5TH
Portland, OR 97208
241-5201

*I B Computers **
1519 SW Marlow
Portland, OR 97225
297-8425

*Computers Etc. ***
1513 NE 122ND (Halsey)
Portland, OR 97230
252-0179

Computerola
6224 SE Main (resd.)
Portland, OR
239-4315

*Video Show Place
2029 NE Burnside
Gresham, OR
661-1946

* Discount is available to PAC members.

** Each month, there will be an item available to PAC members at a special discount price.

*** Computers Etc. seems to be getting out of the Atari business, give them a call before making a long trip there.

MICROFILER

Clyde Pritchard

MicroFiler (MF), by Jim Harrison, is a cartridge based data filing program for all Atari computers. It is marketed by Microbits Peripheral Products (MPP) of Albany, Oregon. The list price of the program is $49.95, however it is available a slightly lower prices locally and via mail order houses.

There is no minimum memory requirement for the program, but because the number of records that you can store is limited by the amount of RAM that your system has, the more you have, the better. You can use MF on a disk or cassette based system with no difference in the way it works, except in data storage and retrieval. You don't even have to have a printer, but of course you will be able to do more if you have one.

The reason that disk and cassette systems will operate in the same manner with MF is that it always stores all of your data in memory while you are adding, updating or printing records. It doesn't even require a disk boot. This must be due to use of the Operating System's Resident Disk Handler in place of the externally loaded File Management System (DOS). This also means that you can forget to have your disk drive on when you boot, and not have to start over.

To use MF, just put the cartridge in the slot, and turn on the power switch. The Main Menu will appear immediately, and you have three choices; Create File, Load File, and Resume. The first time that you use MF, you will need to select the Create File option to define the items of information (data fields) that you want to store in your file. This process involves "painting" a data entry / display screen with heading information, field names, and data type and length information. You can use the special graphics characters on your keyboard to "spice-up" the look of your screen, but you cannot use inverse video characters, because they are used to define data type and length. MF supports both character and numeric data types. You can specify character fields as mandatory or optional. You are allowed to use 37 characters per line, and 21 of the 24 lines on the screen. The top line is used for Option Lists, and is followed by a blank line. The bottom line is used for messages. You need to be sure that your format is just right before you enter a lot of data into your file, because when you change the screen format, any records you have entered are lost. This means that you will need to define a format, then experiment with it to make sure that is is right, before building a file of several hundred records. The only way to convert a large file to a new format is to print it, redefine the format, then re-key the entire file. This is not fun for most people. As long as you have a good idea of what you want, and do some experimenting (also called modeling), MF will be fine.

Once you have defined your file format and screen display, you can begin entering information into your file. You are presented with the screen layout you just defined with the Main Option List on the top line. The options available are Enter, Retrv, Save, Frm Print and Memory?. To enter new records, press "E", and then all you have to do is type. When you have entered everything for that screen, you press <START> to store the record. A new screen will be displayed, and you can enter the information for the next record, or press <RESET> to return to the main menu. Then choose the Resume option to redisplay the Main Option List and your screen format.

To retrieve or update records, just enter "R" to select the RETRV option from the Main Option List at the top of the screen. The program will display your screen format, and the top line will contain a new option list. You have the following options: FWD, which lets you step forward through the entries one at a time; BWD, which lets you step backward through the entries; RST, which resets the file to the beginning, and clears the screen; SCH, which allows you to search any field you choose for a particular entry, and display all the records found; CNG, allows you to update the fields for the record on the screen; PRT, which lets you print an image of the screen; DLT, which lets you delete an entry from the file; SUM, which displays a sum of each numeric field; or AVG, which will display the average of each numeric field.

The FWD and BWD options are used when you just want to page through your file. The RST option gives you a quick method to go back to the first record in the file. The SCH option has several options: you can do a General Search; a Sorted Search; a Range Search; a Multiple Field Search; a Full Record Search; or you can simply Sort the file, then use FWD and BWD to page through the file.

All of the search options except the General and Full Record searches allow the file to be sorted as part of the search function. The sort feature of the Sorted Search can be turned off.

After adding or updating information, you should save your data to tape or disk (before somebody pulls the plug or some other disaster occurs.) First, return to the Main Menu by pressing <RESET>, then select the Resume option to redisplay the Main Option List. Next, choose the Save option by pressing "S". If you have a disk drive, you will be prompted for a file name, and then the file will be written to the pre-formatted disk in drive 1. If you are saving a file that you loaded from disk, the file name you enter must match the name of the file on the disk. If it doesn't, you can continue, but the file will have a new name, or if you had the wrong disk in the drive, you just lost a file (unless you have a backup.) In other words, the file name feature is used to prevent you from writing one file on top of another, but if you ignore the warning, you better be right! If you have a cassette system, you will be prompted with the normal 2 beeps, and after you press a key, the file will be saved to your tape.

The disk files created by MF are not DOS compatible, which means you can't expect to process them with your own program. Also, you can store only one file per disk. MF does not have a Format Disk option, so you must format your disk with DOS. A BASIC program for formatting disks is provided for users who do not have Atari DOS 2.0 or a DOS that will format a disk in DOS 2.0 format. This means that the program does not use double density format, but it doesn't need to because even a single density disk can store more than the computer's RAM can.

To load a file, select the Load option from the Main Menu. If loading from tape, you will be prompted with 1 beep, and after you press a key the file will be loaded.

The Memry? selection on the Main Option List will display a message telling you how many more records can be added to your file.

The last selection on the Main Option List is Frm Print. When you choose this selection, a new option list with two choices will appear. You can Change Format or Print. MF has a default report format which will produce a columnar report of your file. If you want to change the sequence of the columns, or print labels, you will need to use the Change Format selection.

Once you have your report format defined, you select the Print Option to print the report (or labels) you want. You are prompted for a search key, or you can choose to print all records.

*** Summary ***

MicroFiler seems to perform as advertised, and does it quite well. It is a simple filing system, but is elegant in many ways. It is fast because it has all of the data in RAM, and only does I/O when loading and storing data when you begin and end a session. It has the capability to store a report format so you don't have to redefine your report every time you want to print it. I wish that SynFile+ could store a report format. Yes, you can do more things with SynFile+, it has more options, etc., but these "pro's" can turn into "con's" when you just want a simple file.

The operator's manual is a 45 page booklet in tutorial format. It does at least as good a job as the SynFile+ manual (OK, but could be better.) It also has sample file layouts for a Christmas Card List, a Recipe File, an Expense Account, and a Coin Collection Inventory. Each of these samples is described and explained in the manual. They should give the beginning user a head start toward setting up their own file.

I like this program. I was surprised and impressed with its features. For certain applications its "limitations" are no problem. I converted my Assembler SIG file to MicroFiler from SynFile+. I can be looking at the data under MF in less time than it takes to boot SynFile+. Given that you can get SynFile+ for less than $50.00 now, it's a hard choice, but I think it comes down to simplicity versus complexity. If you have a simple application in mind and don't want to be overwhelmed by an array of complex features, you should consider MicroFiler.

HOW TO DO IT....

BLOCK I/O WITH ATARI BASIC

David Pelinka

The ability to read or write a block of characters from a data storage device with BGET and BPUT is one of the many nice features of BASIC XL. It is much faster than handling one character at a time and you can read or write an entire file as fast as the DOS LOAD and SAVE commands. Unfortunately, Atari BASIC does not have BGET and BPUT so it is limited to single byte (GET, PUT) and record (INPUT, PRINT) processing. If you're an Atari BASIC owner, you can still use block I/O (input-output) by calling the routines in ROM. The following demo shows how to do it. Even if you own BASIC XL as I do you can learn a lot about how the Atari works by trying the demo. You'll appreciate how much work BASIC XL saves you, with just these two commands.

The program below demonstrates reading and writing a block of characters to disk by poking the correct values into the IOCB (Input-Output Control Block) memory and calling the CIO (Central Input-Output Utility) to do the work. It is not meant to be a subroutine for inclusion in your own program, but only to document and demonstrate the technique. The information for this program came from Mapping the ATARI by an Chadwick. It's a book you can't be without if you do any Atari programming at all. See pages 85-88 for details about IOCBs and pages 146-147 regarding the CIO. Here's a short blow by blow description of what's going on.

LINE 50: The ML$ string contains a short machine language program which jumps to the CIO vector where the actual disk access occurs. **(Be sure to type the * and d as inverse characters.)** For the assembly language programmers in the audience the opcodes are; PLA PLA PLA TAX JMP $E456. The variable IOCB0 is the location of the first IOCB block located at memory location 832.

LINE 100: This is just to show we can use any IOCB (or channel) except #0 which is used by the editor, #6 which is used by BASIC graphics commands and #7 which is used by the printer.

LINE 110: We'll use A$ to store the data as it's read in, or the data we enter before it's written to disk.

LINE 120-130: Setup the variables to specify read or write. The variable IO is used in line 140 and 210. ICCOM is used in line 160. If we're writing data, we enter our input into A$.

LINE 160-210: Here is where we set up the IOCB for the activity we want to perform. The memory locations used are referenced from IOCB zero. There are 16 bytes for each IOCB so we add 16 times our IOCB number (1-5). Then we add the byte offset of the data we're poking. The two byte locations require a little math. (BASIC XL has DPOKE which pokes a number into two successive bytes automatically. What a deal!)

LINE 230: Here's where we jump off into the CIO which does the actual disk access based on the info in the IOCB. That second parameter gave me fits. It's not explicitly shown in Mapping the ATARI.

LINE 240-260: If this is a read, we convert the codes of the data read into A$ into ATASCII characters and print them on the screen. It takes longer to print them than it does to read them.

```
10 REM BLOCK DISK I/O IN ATARI BASIC
20 REM DEMO BY DAVID PELINKA 2/85
30 ? CHR$(125):? :? "BLOCK DISK I/O IN BASIC DEMO"
40 DIM F$(14),ML$(7),IO$(1)
50 ML$="hhh*LVd":IOCB0=832:REM * AND d IN ML$ are INVERSE!
60 ? :? :? "Filename (use D:FN) ";:INPUT F$
70 ? "Read(R) or Write(W) ";:INPUT IO$
80 IF IO$<>"R" AND IO$<>"W" THEN 70
90 ? "How many bytes long ";:INPUT BYTES
100 ? "Channel # to use (1-5) ";:INPUT IOCB
110 DIM A$(BYTES)
120 IF IO$="R" THEN IO=4:ICCOM=7
130 IF IO$="W" THEN IO=8:ICCOM=11:? :? "Type string to write to disk, ( ";BYTES;")":INPUT A$
140 OPEN #IOCB,IO,0,F$
150 REM POKE IN IOCB VALUES ==> IOCB START + IOCB# * 16 + OFFSET
160 POKE IOCB0+IOCB*16+2,ICCOM:REM BINARY READ OR WRITE
170 HI=INT(ADR(A$)/256):LO=ADR(A$)-HI*256
180 POKE IOCB0+IOCB*16+4,LO:POKE IOCB0+IOCB*16+5,HI:REM BUFFER ADDRESS
190 HI=INT(BYTES/256):LO=BYTES-HI*256
200 POKE IOCB0+IOCB*16+8,LO:POKE IOCB0+IOCB*16+9,HI:REM BUFFER LENGTH
210 POKE IOCB0+IOCB*16+10,IO:REM AUX1
220 REM JUMP TO CIOV, STACK MUST INCLUDE IOCB# * 16
230 X=USR(ADR(ML$),IOCB*16)
240 IF IO$="W" THEN ? "File written...";:GOTO 270
250 ? :? F$;" begins..."
260 FOR I=0 TO BYTES-1:CH=PEEK(ADR(A$)+I):? CHR$(CH);:NEXT I
270 CLOSE #IOCB:CLR :GOTO 40
```

* * * * * End Of Listing * * * * *

PARALLEL PRINTER INTERFACES

Clay Gradis

When looking for a printer for use with your Atari you have two options: 1. Buy an Atari or Atari compatible printer, or 2. Buy a printer and a printer interface. Because most Atari specific printers are not the greatest, most people choose option 2.

This option carries with it an extra $60-$120 for the interface. When you are shopping for an interface you should keep this in mind and buy the interface which best fits your needs. In this article I will talk about three of the interfaces which I have used, and the logic I used in selecting my interface.

The Cardco Card?/AT and the MPP 1100 printer interfaces sell for between $59.95 and $90.00 at various locations around town. These interfaces are the same model made by MPP and will be reviewed as one. These interfaces work properly with the Atari but have some drawbacks.

The first, and foremost in my opinion, is the fact that they have no place for the hooks on your printer to hook into. They are secured to the printer by sliding their parallel cards into the parallel slot on the back of the printer. This connection is often loose and the interface can fall off easily.

The second drawback is the fact that the interface sticks out around six or seven inches behind the printer. Because of this you have to leave room for the interface and then more room for the paper to come over it. If you have a large work space this is not a problem, but if your like me and have your Atari in a corner with limited space this becomes a major concern.

The final drawback is that the interface cannot daisy chain and has to be at the end of the line. If you have a 410 cassette recorder or some other peripheral that does not chain then you have to keep swapping I/O spots.

The MPP 1150 interface has none of these drawbacks. It has an extra I/O port on it for daisy chaining. It does not plug directly into the printer, rather it has a five foot parallel cord coming from it which snaps in place on the printer. The 1150 also is expandable to be a 2k buffer. The cost for this is $15 and well worth it. The 1150 sells for $80-$110 and can be found in most Atari shops.

I bought my first interface, the Card?/AT, because of its price. Within two days I took it back because I found I didn't like its limitations. I then bought the 1150 and have been extremely happy.

When shopping for an interface remember that there are still many more types available than those I've listed. One of the others may fit your needs. Be sure to look at as many as you can and try them out, even if it's only in the store. Look at the space they take up and see how they are secured to the printer. A great printer can really boost the joy you get from your computer.

ComputerolaComputerolaComputerolaComputerolaComputerolaComputerolaC
omputerolaComputerola

PRODUCT LIST NOW AVAILABLE

CALL

239-4315

DRIVES...MONITORS...PRINTERS...SOFTWARE...HARDWARE

MICROBIT 64k BUFFER
(in stock)

omputerolaComputerola
239-4315**239-4315**239-4315*239-4315**239-4315**239-4315**239-4315

MARCH

WED 03/13 - Assembler SIG Meeting
WED 03/13 - Newsletter to Printer
MON 03/18 - Newsletter Mailing
TUE 03/19 - ATR SIG Meeting
WED 03/20 - Business SIG Meeting
TUE 03/26 - PACE SIG Meeting
WED 03/27 - Assembler SIG Meeting

APRIL

MON 04/01 - PAC General Meeting
MON 04/01 - Normal Article Deadline
TUE 04/05 - Commercial Ad Deadline
THU 04/04 - Newsletter SIG Meeting
THU 04/04 - Beginner's SIG Meeting
SAT 04/06 - Final Article Deadline
SAT 04/06 - Newsletter Production
MON 04/08 - Newsletter Final Layout
WED 04/10 - Assembler SIG Meeting
WED 04/10 - Newsletter to Printer
TUE 04/16 - Newsletter Mailing
TUE 04/16 - ATR SIG Meeting
WED 04/24 - PAC Board Meeting
WED 04/17 - Business SIG Meeting
TUE 04/30 - PACE SIG Meeting

MAY

WED 05/01 - Assembler SIG Meeting
MON 05/06 - PAC General Meeting

PORTLAND ATARI CLUB
P.O. Box 1692
BEAVERTON, OR 97005

BULK RATE
U.S. POSTAGE PAID
BEAVERTON, OREGON
PERMIT NO. 242